

Persuasive Messages: Organizing and Presenting

ARISTOTLE wrote about persuasive techniques more than 2,000 years ago. The purpose of persuasion is to convince an audience to adopt a new attitude, buy a new product, or donate to a cause. Speakers and writers use persuasive techniques to grab the attention of an audience; establish credibility and trust; and motivate people to buy, vote, donate time or money, and change their beliefs.



Objectives:



1. Identify the major purpose of a persuasive speech.
2. Explain the steps in preparing a persuasive message.
3. Describe delivery techniques in a persuasive message.

Key Terms:



character
competence
expert opinions
facts
hook

inspirational speech
intent
personality
persuasive speech
proposition

proposition of
evaluation
proposition of fact
proposition of policy
speech to convince

The Purpose of a Persuasive Speech

A **persuasive speech** is a speech designed to change the way the audience feels about something or the way they act. The major purpose of persuasive speaking is to stimulate people to think, feel, and act. The key to a successful persuasive speech is to promote a clear purpose. A persuasive purpose statement is called a **proposition**. Generally, a proposition is phrased to reinforce a belief, change a belief, or move an audience to act.

A speech that seeks to reinforce a belief is an **inspirational speech**. The speaker's goal is to make the audience feel good or inspired about something. In contrast, a **speech to convince** is a speech intended to change or alter a belief; it must clearly explore the new belief or attitude desired. The primary focus of this speech is to contrast the speech's logical position about a new belief or attitude against an old belief or attitude. Meanwhile, a speech intended to move the audience to act must clearly convey its purpose. The intent of this type of speech is to motivate audience members to act according to the plan in your speech.



FIGURE 1. These men are engaged in persuasive speaking in an office.

PERSUASIVE MESSAGE CONTENT

Persuasive messages should contain the following information:

- ◆ An explanation of why the message is important
- ◆ A clear statement of the point of view, the purpose for stating the proposal, and the benefits of supporting it
- ◆ The arguments, with evidence supporting the view
- ◆ A restatement of the proposal
- ◆ A call for action on the proposal

Persuasive Message Preparation

Several guidelines should be followed in preparing a persuasive report or presentation. Persuasive speech propositions can be classified in three categories: proposition of fact, proposition of evaluation, and proposition of policy.

- ◆ A **proposition of fact** is a statement that attempts to prove something is true. This could be about past, present, or future events or a state of affairs.
- ◆ A **proposition of evaluation**, sometimes termed “proposition of value,” is a statement that attempts to prove that a person, place, thing, or action is good or bad.
- ◆ A **proposition of policy** is a statement that attempts to persuade the audience as to what should be done.

FACTORS THAT DETERMINE PROPOSITION WORDING

The further the proposition is from the listeners' beliefs, the harder it will be to convince them. In addition, the more difficult the goal is for the audience to achieve, the less likely the chances for success. Whenever the proposition can be worded so the speech appears easy, the success rate for persuasiveness will increase greatly.

The more ego-involved the audience is with the topic, the less likely the proposal will be successful. For example, if your audience is a group of beef producers and you are trying to convince them that red meat is harmful, your success rate would be less than with an audience of health science students.

Logical Outline

A persuasive argument or presentation should follow a logical outline:

- ◆ Identify the subject and purpose of the presentation.
- ◆ Next, state the point of view.
- ◆ Present the first argument and supporting evidence.
- ◆ Present the second argument and supporting evidence.
- ◆ Present the third argument and supporting evidence.
- ◆ Call for action.



ON THE JOB...

CAREER CONNECTION: Persuasive Requests for Money

Three uses for persuasive business letters are requests for money, sales messages, and collection letters. Readers must realize how they will benefit from responding to your request. You must make it obvious how the product or service you are promoting will be gainful to them. Often solicitations, sales campaigns, and collection letters require more than a single persuasive letter. Each new message must pick up where the previous letter left off. Proceed slowly because people resist being pushed into things. They need time to consider how acting on your message will benefit them.

In addition to business requests for money, churches, universities, and organizations (e.g., political, activist, and public service) solicit donations. Fundraising for charitable organizations is conducted with persuasive letters as well as telephone campaigns.

Donors are categorized as major and small givers. The major givers are wealthy donors, corporations, and foundations that respond to rational appeals. Smaller donors may respond to emotional appeals. Persuasion must be effective to convince both types of donors that their money will be well spent to help others.

Steps

Prior to writing the persuasive speech, five steps should be completed. The speaker must determine the issue, thoroughly understand the issue, focus on the delivery, select the best argument(s), and identify the supporting evidence.

Persuasive Message Delivery Techniques

A successful persuasive speech must be credible, logical in organization, emotional, and ethical. Some characteristics that show credibility to be considered in preparing and delivering a persuasive speech are competence, intent, character, and personality.

- ◆ **Competence** is the speaker's capability. If the speaker has a good record of giving advice or information about the subject matter, he or she will be considered credible. Educational background and experience can increase credibility. A successful speaker must be credible.
- ◆ **Intent** is the characteristic of credibility that refers to the speaker's motive in giving the presentation. There has to be honesty in terms of intent.
- ◆ **Character** is the speaker's moral and ethical traits. If the speaker's background is that of dishonesty, deceit, and other similar traits, the speaker will not be perceived as truthful.
- ◆ **Personality** is the sum total of the speaker's behavioral and emotional characteristics and is responsible for the impression made on the audience.

CREDIBILITY

You demonstrate credibility to the audience by being ready to speak, being adequately prepared, showing interest in your listeners, speaking with enthusiasm, and maintaining eye contact.

ORGANIZATION

The ability to arrange the main points of the speech to illustrate the reasons for the audience to accept the proposition is critical to its success. Brainstorming is a good way to begin developing ideas and logic. The presentation will be more effective if the reasons are limited to the three or four best ones. Select reasons that influence the audience logically or emotionally, can be supported, and are the best to prove your proposition.

EVIDENCE

Evidence to support persuasive presentations is of two types: facts and expert opinions. **Facts** are statements and information that can be verified. **Expert opinions** are beliefs held by people with good reputations and knowledge of the subject.

EMOTIONAL APPEALS

Develop an emotional appeal through reasoning. Practice describing feelings and mental images. Make sure the reasons have impact. Emotional appeals are most effectively used in the introduction and/or conclusion of the speech and are sometimes called a **hook**—an attention-grabber presented as a story, verse, picture, or experience.

ETHICS

Persuasive presentations will be more effective when they are ethical. Ethics are the rules or standards of conduct that shape behavior. Unethical behaviors include stretching the truth, putting slanderous labels on opposing positions, distorting facts, and lying.

EFFECTIVENESS

The manner in which the speech is delivered will influence its effectiveness. Three major areas that influence the effectiveness of the presentation are voice, physical presence, and language.

Voice

Use a pleasant pitch, speak at a proper rate of speed, and have the appropriate volume for the setting.

Physical Presence

Maintain good eye contact, use good posture while delivering, include appropriate hand and voice gestures, use visuals when acceptable, dress appropriately for the occasion, and use notes sparingly.

Language

Pronounce words properly, use correct grammar, and use appropriate vocabulary.

Summary:



A persuasive speech is a speech designed to change the way the audience feels about something or the way they act. The major purpose of persuasive speaking is to stim-



FIGURE 2. Always use good posture while delivering a persuasive presentation.

ulate people to think, feel, and act. A persuasive purpose statement is a proposition. A speech that seeks to reinforce a belief is inspirational. A speech to convince is intended to change or alter a belief.

A persuasive argument or presentation must identify the subject and purpose of the presentation, state the point of view, present the arguments with supporting evidence, and have a call for action. To establish credibility, you must thoroughly understand the subject, determine the issue, and focus on the delivery. Some characteristics that reflect credibility are competence, intent, character, and personality.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What is the major purpose of persuasive speaking?
2. List five points that a persuasive speech contains.
3. What is the outline that a persuasive argument or presentation should follow?
4. Identify two types of support persuasive presentations use.
5. Explain the hook used in persuasive presentations.

Expanding Your Knowledge:



A great deal of money is spent to mail sales solicitations, requests for donations, and promotions for political causes. Collect several pieces of this type of mail that is sent to your home. Analyze the content. Find the explanation of why the message is important, how it should benefit you or your household, its persuasive arguments, any supporting evidence, a restatement of the proposal, and a call for action on the proposal.

Web Links:



Persuasive Message

<http://www.lead-converter.com/blog/how-to-create-a-persuasive-message-to-motivate-your-audience/>

Writing Persuasive Messages

http://emedia.leeward.hawaii.edu/hurley/modules/mod3/3_docs/persuasive.pdf

Persuasive Techniques

<http://sps.k12.mo.us/pvms/tmmaerke/Webquests/PowerofPersuasion/persuasivetechniques.html>

Timeless Persuasive Writing Techniques

<http://www.copyblogger.com/persuasive-writing/>